Remitting Fever

1806.

John Gilmer

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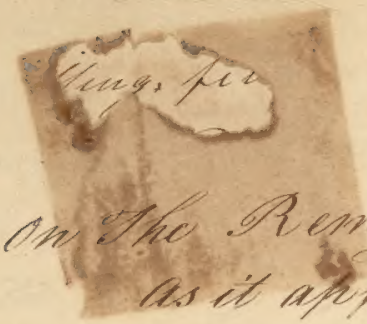

On The Remitting Fever
as it appeared
In Albemarle County Virginia
In the year 1806
John Gilmer, was born in Albem.
Court Virg. the 30th of April in
the year 1784

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The, Remitting, fever appeared in Albe-
-marle county, Virginia, in the year 1845
about the first of July, and was preceded
by a mild form of dysentery. the season
was exceeding dry, and warm, many
water courses became perfectly dry,
which had never been known to fail
before, consequently, a great quantity of
vegetable matter in a state of putrefac-
tion, was now exposed to the action of
the sun, some families were obliged
to send several miles for water, and
frequently used it in a very impure
state. The wind blew almost unifor-
-mly from the south west. with these
preliminary observation, I shall
proceed, to the symptoms of the disease
in question, on its first appearance.
it

was of a mild form, but as the season advanced, and became colder, the disease put on a more inflamatory type. A dull heavy sensation pervaded the whole system, chillines, indisposition to move afondness for being in the sun. obtuse pain in the head, stiffness with some degree of pain in the back of the neck, and a white tongue were the general characteristics of the forming state of this disease. In a few days the pain ~~in the head~~, gave place to giddiness, which was so great in many cases, as to prevent the patient from walking or even sitting up, young persons when raised up would scream out as if affrighted the pain which was at

first

more particularly confined to the neck
now extended down to the lumbar region
the tongue became more dry and apu-
-med a yellow colour. the pulse which
was not so particularly affected at
first, now became depressed, or quick and
tense. In many cases diarrhœa attended
from the commencement of the disease,
and if suffered to continue, never failed
to debilitate the patient extremely.
but there were other cases in which the
bowels were obstinately bound, nor cou-
-ld this state be obviated but by the ex-
-hibition of the most powerful purga-
-tives. acute pain in the sides and shou-
-lders, with cough and sore throat, somti-
-mes attended, but these were by no mea-
-ans constant symptoms-

As the disease advanced the patient became extremely weak, particularly in those cases where diarrhœa had prevailed the discharges now became more copious and if not checked, more fœtid and acrid followed by delirium, coma, subsultus tendinum and death. In many cases where V. Section had been omitted in the early stages of the disease. the patient would be attacked with a most alarming discharge of blood from the intestines, when this occured the pulse would be very fluctuating, at one time strong and tense, and in a few minutes sinking to a degree of debility, which rendered it imperceptable in the wrist. In most cases there was a considerable degree of tension in the pulse

just

before the discharge of blood took place.
suppression of urine sometimes occurred.
the tongue was frequently in the last stages
of the disease, dry and of a red or black colour
swollen feet with excruciating pain always
attended convalescence

Having mentioned the symptoms most com-
-mon to this disease. I shall now give a
general plan of the method of
treatment which appeared to be most
successful. an emetic given before the
disease was completely formed. frequently
arrested its progress, but after its forma-
-tion. V. Section regulated in frequency
and quantity by the state of the pulse
was always used with the happiest effects
the blood when drawn and permitted to
stand constantly showed some sign of
inflamation

after the loss of blood provided the quanti-
-ty taken had been regulated by the state
of the system. the pulse became soft and
free, and the strength of the patient
was frequently increased. after proper
depletion emetics were used with advan-
-tage. except in such cases as were atten-
-ded with diarrha, in these it was almost
impossible to produce puking, particular-
-ly if Tartar Emetic was used, as it never
failed to pass off by the bowels. Ipecac
was the most certain emetic in this
disease. when costiveness prevailed
if the pulse was active. after V. Sa
a dose of Cal. h. p. & Jalapii was given
it was found necessary to use purgatives
frequently. care being taken. that their
operation was not excessive, which
would

frequently be the case if not particularly attended to, after the disease was continued for some time, purgatives of a milder nature were used. when diarrhœa attended after the exhibition of a mild purgative. a few drops of Liquid Laud. in mint tea were generally found sufficient to check the discharges. the Laud was repeated whenever the diarrhœa became copious, if moderate it was permitted in most cases to continue. If the head was much affected blisters were found useful, after proper depletion. when applied early in the disease they never failed to render every symptom more violent. in the remission of fever tonics were used. Columbo. Cold Chamomile &c

Pop

tea were found to answer best. Tonics were sometimes used during the remission, when it would be found necessary to deplete in the exacerbation of fever in the morning of the same day. Antimonials were sometimes used with advantage after arterial action had been reduced, but before this was accomplished nothing would produce a determination to the surface. discharges of blood only occurred in those cases where the lancet had been too sparingly used in the early stages of the disease. when this took place, V.S. was used when indicated by the pulse. mild laxatives astringents and blis-

-ters

to the acids were used with the hap-
-piest effects. Mercury was used by some
practitioners and authorised, to do great
mischief, when salivation was produced.
as mortification of the gums and caries
of the jaw bone sometimes took place.
I believe this effect occurred only in
those cases where mercury was used
too early in the disease and before
inflamatory action was sufficient-
-ly reduced. Cleanliness and fresh
air were indispensible requisites
in the cure of this disease. many
sick persons were not confined
in the same room. small houses
at hours convenient to the houses of
patients, were found very useful
among negroes. where they might
be

carried in the day, during which time their houses were well aired. But few cases terminated fatally where the above remedies were used in proper time—

The disease was by some practicioners taken for Typhus fever and treated as such, which method as may readily be supposed was very unsuccessful. I have known this disease continue for eight weeks, and be attended with inflamatory symptoms to the last and have seen patients bled in in the eighth week with advantage—

In order to illustrate the nature of this disease more fully, I shall here

nearly mention the appearance of the contents, of the abdomen thorax & cranium on dissection — a negro man aged 22. died on the 45 day of the disease — on opening the abdomen, the small intestines were found, inflamed, and adhering to strongly to the peritoneum mesenteric glands enlarged. Liver natural. Gall bladder full of green bile. Spleen enlarged. Lungs natural except that the left was attached to the pleura, which was perhaps the consequence of previous disease — on opening the cranium the meninges were a little inflamed and upon cutting into the ventricles about three ounces of clear water were discharged —